

PURSUIT

by Daniel Casolaro

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I won't tell everyone but I will tell you.

It was not until I had fumbled my own way through a good many successes and an appalling number of failures that I began to truly appreciate and finally revere this unique man about whom I now write.

As his last deeply contemporary confidante, I am in possession of material which no one else has the privilege to expound. While everyone possesses in the unconscious an apparatus for understanding the unconscious of another, words ~~convey~~ ^{and eventually to} convey the power to discover ~~the~~ humanity or disguise it. So I ask you to forgive my lapses and failings without blame or censoriousness.

The story of this tremendous lover and of the love he found and how it was lost and found again represents the ultimate measure of my insight. Therefore, I must recklessly commit everything my years have taught me to these pages. For my own part, I must look into my own ~~buried~~ ² life with anguish and humility to make this man's life accessible.

His eccentricities might have been more acceptable in another time. Because he produced wherever he went a kaleidoscopic change in one's vision of the world, others felt in him, almost by instinct, the seed of a new order; they sensed, even as they anathematized him the passing away of the sane, substantial world they had long inhabited. Such a man is a kind of lens or gathering point through which past thought gathers, is reorganized and radiates outward again into new

forms. Such a man was Albert Dinwoodie Stark.

Stark's downfall was not his season of hardship, anxiety or adversity. It was rather his own curiosity which constantly led him into unexplored regions of the heart, regions from which he might not return. But return he did. For the rest of us, haunted by memory, we are content to revel in our fears. We cling to the past, to old photographs and letters because they comfort our intangible need for location in time and a sense of belonging.

When Stark's eyes were forever closed against the sun, I watched from the back of the gathering as small clusters of people walked towards the casket. Many of the women were young, beautiful and impassive. Except for three or four who were crying, most of them did not even grieve. They were gathered to pay respects to a man who mattered to them. Thus assembled, they were pleased finally to observe the others who shared him. I got the impression that some lasting friendships would begin on that gray afternoon.

My thoughts were distracted when I heard footsteps behind me. I turned and saw her dark bearing and proud shoulders advancing with such certainty.. Her brown hair was tied back with a black ribbon. She stood alone while the casket was lowered and then turned to face the people nearest her. I tried to hear what she said. I think she thanked them for coming, almost in a whisper. Then she walked away, back towards me and down the path with the steady, sure step that only Stark had believed in. She looked at me as she passed with the longing of someone who wished it all could have been different.

All of the others dissolved into the mist that day for me. Only she was there, framed against a dark forest, her back toward all of us. This was Maggie Stark.

I was much younger then and prone to elevate every circumstance of mystery and desire. But the vision I had that day remains intact, a vision which I had never seen before and am not likely to ever see again.

Watching her walk away, I was overwhelmed with all the neglected truths and cardinal propositions that ^a ~~my~~ great work of art must convey at the moment of conception. If the Muses are right and severe beauty arrests desire, then another, more certain kind of beauty imposes respect. In that moment, a ~~large~~ stellar explosion of the mind took place and I acknowledged that Maggie was unclassifiably the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. That shock, during that one moment, after having known her well for several years, suggested the complete contagion of empathy, wiping out the boundaries between myself and my dead friend.

Sp. I had not even scarcely recognized Maggie's dimensions until that moment and it was no mild thrill, by some mystical sensory perception, to see her as Stark had seen her. The particularities of inspiration and obsession were now as wholly clear as the crystal windows of the rain. It was Maggie who represented the singular rhythm of Stark's action and conduct, enlarging his circle step by step, like a pebble thrown into a lifeless pond.

Everything can be beautiful from the vantage of the mind but the prophecy of the heart, as imprecise as it is and about which science is silent, knows the painful kingdom of danger, expostulation and pain. While one part of him, expressing those social emotions he never owned, imagined he might be worthy of her love, another part of him, containing the contents of his true emotions, knew that she was beyond his will. This was ^{had to be} where his ~~dark~~ spirit, which even he could not contain, was born because the unattainable was always just as reachable and just as unreachable as Maggie. Stark had no more right to Maggie than he had the right to the sunset and it was this very vulnerability that she could never have known and could never learn. ~~Had she just been able to know it, though the ultimate triumph she longed for would not have been attained?~~
~~a tragedy.~~

Most of us are incapable of concentrating our erotic will consistently on one person so it is ever more difficult to be the recipient of such concentration. Had she just been able to feel it, the ultimate triumph she longed for would not have been exhausted by her self assertions.

As ~~she~~ ~~and I followed~~ ^{both} Maggie ~~dove~~ away, the new sky in the distance illuminated the high bond I had ~~just~~ witnessed and the covenant to the moist black earth that must have haunted Stark's convictions in the wake of his dreams.

with doubt ?

evasive ?

with